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LETTERS

FROM THE

UNITED STATES.

BY THE REV. S. WOOD.

[FROM THE CHRISTIAN REFORMER, FOR DECEMBER, 1837.]

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C. SMALLFIELD, PRINTER, HACKNEY

LETTERS FROM THE UNITED STATES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMER.

SIR,

London, Nov. 2, 1837.

If you think that the following letter would afford any gratification to the readers of *The Christian Reformer*, it is very much at your service. I have also a "Lecture on Sunday Schools in the United States of America," which I delivered at the Spicer Street Chapel last week, and which I will forward to you for insertion, if you please, in a subsequent Number.

Very respectfully yours,

S. WOOD.

[We hope to receive Mr. Wood's promised Lecture in time for the Number for January.—EDITOR.]

DEAR H —, *Hartford, Connecticut, Oct. 22d, 1836.*

I INTENDED to write to you again before this, but I have been so incessantly occupied with seeing sights and entering into society, that I have never been able to find a moment's leisure, in which to put my design in execution: in truth, I am now in the full tide of social enjoyment; and the friends to whom I am introduced are so intelligent, and the objects of interest which they point out to my notice so numerous, that I have scarcely time to record the impressions which are made upon me, by what I am every day seeing and hearing. Each town that I visit has its own peculiar claims to my attention, and I often think that I am like the little boy in the story; who, when the flowers began to peep forth, and the birds to sing, came running to his mother, and exclaimed, "Oh, mamma! what a pleasant time of the year this is! I wish it was always spring!" In two or three months the charms of spring were forgotten, and it was summer, which he would wish to last for ever; and so of autumn and winter; and at the end of the twelve months his observant parent, who had carefully recorded his impressions, recalled to his recollection how each of the four seasons had brought its own attractions with it, and had been, while it lasted, the most delightful of all. It is the same with me;—when I spent a day or two at Philadelphia, soon after I landed, I *guessed* that that would be the place that I should choose to reside in during the winter; when I arrived at Boston, that was better than Philadelphia: to Albany I next went, knowing only one man, and when I came away, in ten days, I had made the acquaintance of a whole host of most intelligent persons; then came the cultivated society, and the hearty merriment of Old Stockbridge; to these succeeded New Haven, which won my heart more than any thing that had gone before; and now I find myself in the bosom of a most kind and

interesting family, and this very day I have enlarged the circle of my friends, by the acquaintance of a man of great learning, an accomplished mind, and most polished manners. And what does all this prove? Nothing more or less than this; that the backwoods of America are one thing, and its cities another; that its roads may be rough, and its stages execrable, and many of those whom you meet in travelling, very far from being gentlefolks; but that, in the great resting-places of your journey, you meet with men, of whom you would be proud to make friends and associates—men of talent and education, full of information, and setting aside even their own convenience, in order to shew you the rights of hospitality, and give you every opportunity of seeing what you wish to see.

Old Stockbridge, to which I came from Albany, and which lies thirty-five miles to the south-east of that place, is a pleasant village, shaded with trees, and situated in a well-wooded part of the country. I was there introduced to Miss Sedgwick, the authoress, and several of her relatives, and also to Mr. A——. He is an Englishman by birth, and as fine a man as I ever saw—grey-headed, and worn in appearance, as he well may be, for he has lived thirty-five years in India, and has twice crossed the deserts of Arabia, but still young and fresh in spirit—full of all that life and soul, which the Americans, with all their acknowledged merits, too commonly want. There are indeed some bright exceptions to the remark, but in general the inhabitants of this land of freedom are far too demure for me: you may pour out upon them the whole treasury of your wit, you may say things which *ought* to “set the table in a roar,” and they will look as serious as the grave; not a muscle of their features will betray an emotion of delight, or all that you can elicit from them, in return for the good things which you have lavished, will be a faint and provoking smile. How refreshing then it was to find myself in the company of one, who had some *soul* in him, and who seemed himself to understand, and wished to make others understand also, that life was given to *be enjoyed*. Never shall I forget his hearty laugh and his soul-stirring animation; it did me good to come within the sphere of its enlivening warmth, and I shall be sorry if I am compelled to quit the States without benefiting by it once more.

From Old Stockbridge I came through a rough but beautiful country, by way of *Van Deusenville*, *Sheffield* and *Canaan*, to Hartford; and thence the next day I proceeded to New Haven—the road, one of the best that I have travelled in the United States, and the movements of the stage the quickest, though nothing to boast of after all, for it took us nearly five hours to accomplish thirty-four miles. I am heartily tired of American stage-travelling; in steam-boats they equal, or, perhaps, exceed us; their railroads, though not quite on a par with the Manchester and Liverpool, are very fair; but their roads are bad, and their coaches miserable: there is scarcely one of them which is hung on steel springs; they are all suspended on leathers, and the consequence is, that you swing about in a style which is enough to shake all life out of your body: it is bad enough when the vehicle is full of passengers, and ten times worse when there are only one or two to ballast it.

You will recollect that Mr. B—— furnished me with a letter of introduction to Professor Silliman of Yale College, New Haven. He is a most accomplished and delightful man, and I must say that I have not yet met with any one in the course of my Transatlantic wanderings, who has more laid himself out to be of service to me, or whose society is more instructive and agreeable. To him and to Professor Kingsley I feel myself greatly indebted for the pains which they took, to shew me everything worthy of notice in and about the town. One of the first objects which they took me to see was the grave of Dixwell, the regicide, who died here in the year 1688-9, in the 82d year of his age, and is interred in the old burying-ground in the rear of the spot on which the Centre Church now stands. At his own request the only inscription on his tomb is that of his initials, I. D. Esq., with his age and the time of his death: this caution was observed, lest “his enemies might dishonour his ashes;” it was, in fact, only just before he died that he told who he was, and owned the name of John Dixwell. Under the feigned name of James Davids, he had lived for many years without molestation in the town of New Haven, and had there married two wives. His political friends, Goffe and Whalley, were not so fortunate; when the king’s warrant for their apprehension arrived at New Haven, they would probably have been taken, had they not been befriended in various ways by the minister and people. Among other devices to assist them, it is recorded, that about the time when their pursuers came to New Haven, or perhaps a little before, in order to prepare the minds of the people for their reception, the Rev. Mr. Davenport preached publicly from this text, Isaiah xvi. 3, 4, “Take counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; *hide the outcasts*; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler.” This, doubtless, had its effect, putting the whole town upon their guard, and uniting the people in caution and concealment. On one occasion, the regicides hid themselves under the very bridge over which their pursuers passed; frequently they betook themselves to some caves on the West Rock, about two miles from the town; and the latter part of their lives they passed in the cellar of the Rev. Mr. Russell, at Hadley, near Northampton; there they died, and there, most probably, they are buried, though this is not certainly known.* I drove out to the West Rock, to view their places of concealment, and seldom have I been more interested with any thing that I have seen. *The higher cave* consists of a fissure, which has been made by some tremendous convulsion of nature, in an immense block of stone, as large as a small house, situated on the top of a high ridge of rock, and surrounded by wood, which was probably thicker in former times than it is now.

On the face of one of the rocks is the inscription—

OPPOSITION TO
TYRANTS IS
OBEDIENCE TO
GOD.

* For an account of the regicides, see “Anecdotes of Eminent Persons,”
2 vols. 8vo.—London, 1804.

This was originally carved by the hands of the fugitives, and has since been renewed from time to time. In this retreat the regicides were supplied with food by the kindness of a neighbouring farmer, of the name of Sperry, who used to send his little boy with provisions tied up in a cloth, which were to be deposited on a certain stump of a tree, that they might be fetched away by the outlaws. Nor yet were hunger and the avenging arm of the law the only evils which they had to dread; one night they saw the bright eyes of a panther glaring in upon them through the entrance of their dwelling, and this so alarmed them, that they made a precipitate retreat. Another of their places of refuge was *the lower cave*, which is somewhat more commodious than the higher, but still a very poor defence against the inclemencies of the weather. As we approached it, the dogs of a kind of American Gipsy, came barking out at us: she was clearly of Indian blood,—one of the perishing remnants of those proud tribes, who were once masters of the soil. Few situations can be imagined more wretched than hers; there she was, living all alone, with no other company, at least, than that of her dogs, for her people, she told me, had been absent on a journey ever since spring; however, she expected them back every day, and in the mean time occupation must have contributed to drive away the thoughts of solitude, for she was busily employed in making baskets, of split maple and ash, and very neat they were; she had not one ready, or I would have purchased it, as a memento of the place.

By the kindness of my friends I was also allowed to inspect the old records of the city of New Haven. They are written in a large folio book, which had evidently been one of the ledgers of Theophilus Eaton, a rich London merchant, one of the first settlers. The most interesting document which it contains is the original treaty with the Indians for the purchase of the land, on part of which the town is built. It bears date November 14th, 1638. The purchase was made from Momauhin, the sachem of Quinipiocke; he and his council appear to have been very sharp fellows, and to have looked well to their own interest, for, although they agree to give up the land in question to the new comers, they at the same time stipulate that they shall have a sufficient quantity to plant on, upon the East side of the harbour; that they shall have the right of hunting, fishing, and taking the beaver, provided they do not set their traps so as to injure the cattle, and that they do not take any fish out of the weirs belonging to the English: that, when they are affrighted in their dwellings, they may fly to the English for shelter and protection, and that they shall moreover receive, “by way of free and thankful retribution, twelve coats of English trucking-cloth, twelve alenny-spoons,* twelve hatchets, twelve hoes, two dozen of knives, twelve porringers, and four cases of French knives and scissors.” One article of the treaty is curious, as it shews both the reverence which the planters had for the sabbath, and the troublesome habits of the people with whom they had to deal: the Indians “bind themselves that none of them shall henceforward hanker about the English houses, at any time, when the English use to meet about

* What is meant by alenny-spoons, I have not been able to ascertain.

the public worship of God, nor on the Lord's day, henceforward, be seen within the compass of the English town, bearing any burden, or offering to truck with the English for any commodity whatsoever." Affixed to this are the signatures, or rather marks, of Momaugin and his councillors; and then follows another treaty, made in December following, for the purchase of another tract, which lay principally to the north of the former. For this Montowese, the sachem, bargained that the English should give him "eleven coats made of trucking-cloth, and one coat for himself, of English cloth, made up after the English manner, and that they should allow him and his tribe ground to plant upon, and liberty to hunt within the lands." The signatures to this treaty are very characteristic, that of Montowese being a bow and arrow, and that of Sawsounk, who accompanied him, a tomahawk.

The first meeting of the colonists to establish their civil and religious polity, was on the 4th of June, 1639: the record begins thus:—"The fourth of the fourth month, called June, 1639, all the free planters assembled together in the great meeting, to consult about settling civil government according to God, and about the nomination of persons that might be found by consent of all, fittest, in all respects, for the foundation-work of a church, which was intended to be gathered in Quinpiocke." Many of the entries in this record-book are very curious, as shewing the habits of the people, and the state of the country. Thus—"At a court held at New Haven the 6th of December, 1643, Goodman Chapman, Brother Davis, John Thomas, Sam Hoskins, Brother Nicholls, Joh. Charles, Thomas Barnes, and Thomas Wheeler, were fined 5. 8 (5s. 8d.) a peece, for want of ladders"—which, it appears, they were required to have affixed to their houses, to be ready in case of fire; and to the same purport we find an order that "every chimney shall be swept once a month in winter, and every two months in summer." In another place we find an order that "whatsoever pigs, under three-quarters-of-a-year old, shall be found in the corne unyoaked, no fence being downe, the owners of them shall pay 6 pence a peece. This order to be in force no longer than till Indian harvest be fined" (finished,) *i. e.* till the Indian corn be got in. And to the same purport—"7th of December, 1642. Forasmuch as John Owen hath had some damage done in his corne, by hogs, occasioned through the neglect of Mr. Lamberton, John Bud, and Will Preston, in not making up their fence in season; it is therefore ordered, thatt the said Mr. Lamberton, John Bud, and Will Preston, shall make satisfaction to the said John Owen, for the damage done, viz.—8 days' work, and 2 pecks of corne, which is to be pay'd according to the several apportions of fence unset up respectively;" which is explained by the circumstance, that, to save expense, a number of men put a common fence round several plots of land, and each was under an obligation to keep his part of it in order. Other entries shew us the dangers which beset the colonists, and how necessary it was considered to keep a strict watch: thus—"Brother Thorpe, for coming late to set his watch, and neglecting to order itt aright, when he did come, was fined 10. 8" (10s. 8d.) "Jerimy Whitnell, for not keeping a sentinell forth, and suffering, at least, some of his watchmen to sleep,

was fined 5. 8;" and again, "October 30th, 1643, Armes on the Lord's day. It was ordered that one of the squadrons, in their course, shall come to the meeting every Saboth compleatly Armed, fitt for service, with, Att the least, 6 charges of shot and poudre, and be ready at the meeting-house within halfe an hower after the first beating of the drum, then and there to be at the comaund of the officer in such service as they are appointed to attend unto on those dayes, under such penalty as the court shall judge meet, according to the nature of their offence; also, the sentinell, and those that walke the round, shall have their matches lighted durement the time of the meeting, if they have match locks."

The strict notions which those first settlers entertained on various points of morals, and of discipline, and their hatred of the Church of England on the one hand, and of heretics in general, on the other, may be judged of from the following extracts from "The Blue Laws of Connecticut," so called because the first printed laws of the colony were stitched in blue-coloured paper. From the first three articles which are cited, it is perfectly clear that those straight-laced sectarians were utterly ignorant of the true principles of religious liberty, for, the very moment that they had escaped from their own persecutors, they were ready to inflict on others the same sufferings, which had driven *them* to take refuge in a foreign land.

"No food or lodging shall be afforded to a Quaker, Adamite, or other heretic.

"If any person turns Quaker, he shall be banished, and not suffered to return on pain of death.

"No priest shall abide in this dominion; he shall be banished, and suffer death on his return. Priests may be seized by any one, without warrant.

"No one to run on the sabbath-day, or walk in his garden, or elsewhere, except reverently to and from meeting. No one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep house, cut hair, or shave on the sabbath-day.

"No woman shall kiss her child on the sabbath or fasting day.

"The sabbath shall begin at sunset on Saturday.*

"Whoever wears clothes trimmed with gold, silver, or bone-lace, above two shillings by the yard, shall be presented by the grand jurors, and the select men shall tax the offender at £300 estate.

"No one shall read common prayer, keep Christmas or Saints' days, make minced pies, dance, play cards, or play on any instrument of music, except the drum, trumpet, or Jews' harp.

"No gospel minister shall join people in marriage; the magistrates only shall join in marriage, as they may do it with less scandal to Christ's church.

"When parents refuse their children convenient marriages, the magistrates shall determine the point.

"No man shall court a maid in person or by letter, without first obtaining consent of her parents: £5 penalty for the first offence; £10 for the second; and for the third, imprisonment during the pleasure of the court.

* Of this custom I am told there are still relics in some parts of New England.

“ Married persons must live together, or be imprisoned.

“ Every male shall have his hair cut round according to a cap.”

The strange inconsistency of these men, and their stern ideas of justice may be judged of by this ; that though one of their laws is, that “ The man-stealer shall suffer death : ” the law next but one in order is this, “ A debtor in prison, swearing he has no estate, shall be let out and *sold*, to make satisfaction.”

The care which the Puritans took to exclude episcopacy from New Haven might be successful at the time, but, if they could now rise from their graves, they would be somewhat astonished and shocked to see two churches of this communion flourishing in the city. One of them is situated on the green, or open park, which occupies the centre of the town. This is a verdant and shady plot of ground, three or four hundred yards each way, and contains three other churches, one belonging to the Baptist, and two to the Congregational denomination—as well as the state-house, a beautiful building in the form of a Grecian temple, with a portico facing the West. New Haven may be well described as *Parisi urbe, et in urbe rus* for most of the houses are apart from each other, and along the sides of the streets are planted rows of trees, which must make this the most delightful of town residences in the summer time. The city contains 15,000 inhabitants ; it stands at the head of a bay, on the northern side of Long Island Sound, and at the lower extremity of a wide plain, shut in by two ranges of hills, which terminate in the east and west rocks, from either of which a charming view is obtained of the surrounding country. Coach-makers, cabinet-makers, shoe-makers and tailors are to be found in great abundance at New Haven, and the new houses which are springing up in every direction, indicate very clearly that they are driving a flourishing business. Large quantities of their manufactured articles are constantly exported to the southern states.

Yale College, so called from one of its earliest benefactors, extends along the whole north side of the green ; the buildings are not remarkable for architectural beauty, but the situation is airy and pleasant. The college was founded A.D. 1700, and for the first few years was located at the village of Killingworth, then at Saybrook, and, finally, was removed to New Haven, in 1716. The course of general study extends through four years, and there are, also, faculties of law, physic, and divinity : the course, in the first, being two years, and in the second and third, three, or two to those medical students who have taken the degree of B.A. The corporation consists of a President and eighteen honourable and reverend assessors ; and there are fourteen professors and eight tutors, besides instructors in law, natural history, French, and drawing. The students, this session, are 570 in number ; the greater part of them reside within the walls of the college, but some, for whom no rooms can be found, are permitted to board in the town : they must all, however, make their appearance at prayers in the chapel, twice a day, in the summer at 5, and in the winter at 6 in the morning, and at 5 in the afternoon. The *necessary* expenses which an undergraduate incurs for instruction, board, lodging, and contingencies, within the college, are stated to be from 150 to

200 dollars a year; and I am informed, that, if he resides at no great distance, and is not extravagant, 300 or 400 dollars, (£70 or £80), in addition to this, will cover all the cost of apparel, pocket-money, and travelling. Those who are very straitened in their circumstances, cut up fire-wood, or wait at table on the others who are dining in the hall; and I was assured by one of the professors, that no reflections whatever are cast upon them by those who have no occasion themselves to have recourse to these menial occupations. The general library of the institution is not so large as might be desired, but there are about 15,000 volumes belonging to the literary societies formed among the students. The College possesses a splendid cabinet of minerals, chiefly purchased from Colonel Gibbs, a good chemical and philosophical apparatus, and a gallery of paintings, including many of those painted by Colonel Trumbull. Among the philosophical instruments let me not omit to particularize an acromatic telescope, ten feet long, made by Dolland, and presented to the College by Sheldon Clarke, Esq. This gentleman is a grazing farmer, and lives a few miles out of town: he had scarcely any advantages of education when he was young, but when he was growing up to manhood, he felt an ardent desire to obtain instruction, and not being then able to pay the usual fees, he was allowed by several of the professors to attend their courses for one winter, gratuitously. The benefit which he thus enjoyed was not forgotten by him; and, when he at length succeeded to a small fortune, he made a provision for establishing a new professorship and a scholarship, and about four years ago he presented the telescope of which I have already made mention. It cost 1200 dollars, (£225), to make up which sum the donor drove his fattened cattle into town and sold them to the college steward; and I am told that he even keeps school in the winter, in order that he may add to his means of doing good in his generation. So noble an example of well-directed generosity deserves to be held up to public approbation; nor yet does he stand altogether alone, for I am happy to add, that, from many other individuals this College has received munificent support; the sum of 100,000 dollars having been raised for it in private donations, in the last five years. It has greatly risen in reputation of late, but it is now suffering under the imputation of what is called *Taylorism*, so called from the doctrines held and propounded by one of the theological professors of the name of Taylor: he is one of the leaders of the new school which has lately sprung up, and holds that man is not guilty of Adam's sin, and that he *can* do his duty. "Very harmless, all this," you will say; "he is no great heretic, if that be the extent of his wanderings;"—yet I am assured that it is for maintaining these doctrines, that all this noise has been made against him.

New Haven contains many excellent schools, but I confined my attention almost exclusively to one, a district school, taught by Mr. Lovell. It is the best of any description that I have yet seen in the States. The moment that I entered the room, I saw a whistle in the master's hand, and observed to the friend who introduced me, "All is right here; that whistle speaks volumes." The school is conducted, with some variations, on the Lancasterian plan, and does infinite credit to the skill and assiduity of the master. He once held

the same situation in the Borough Road Institution in London, but came out to this country, many years ago, with Joseph Lancaster. After he had taught one of the district-schools in this town for some time, he was tempted to accept an offer that was made to him to become teacher of elocution in Amherst College, Massachusetts, but the school which he had left sunk so rapidly from the want of his fostering care, and the conductors of it were so sensible that he only could revive it, that a deputation of them waited on him in person at Amherst, and persuaded him to return. The school now contains 270 boys, and a more orderly and respectable set of little fellows, I never saw in my life; they exhibit the perfection of discipline, yet I am sure that severity is not resorted to in order to produce it. The interrogative method is not yet introduced, but Mr. Lovell is sensible of its merits, and will, I doubt not, adopt it very soon. The attainments of the boys in mental arithmetic, are wonderful; they were directed to multiply 351,426 by 236,145, these factors being written on a black board, but the boys having no slates to work upon. One boy produced the answer, 82,987,492,770 correctly in two minutes; the second boy who came up was wrong, and the third was right in four minutes. At one of the examinations they were required to work, mentally, a sum consisting of 21 figures to be multiplied by 21 figures; and one of them produced the correct answer in 40 minutes; another in the same time produced the answer right, with the exception of one figure, and corrected it in five minutes. All this is greatly to the credit of the teacher, and I wish there were many schools, either here or in England, like Mr. Lovell's. So highly is he estimated where he is, that some of the professors have entrusted their sons to his charge, and speak in the highest terms of his merits.

You see I have filled my paper, and must reserve the lions of Hartford for another letter.

Yours most truly,

S. WOOD.







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